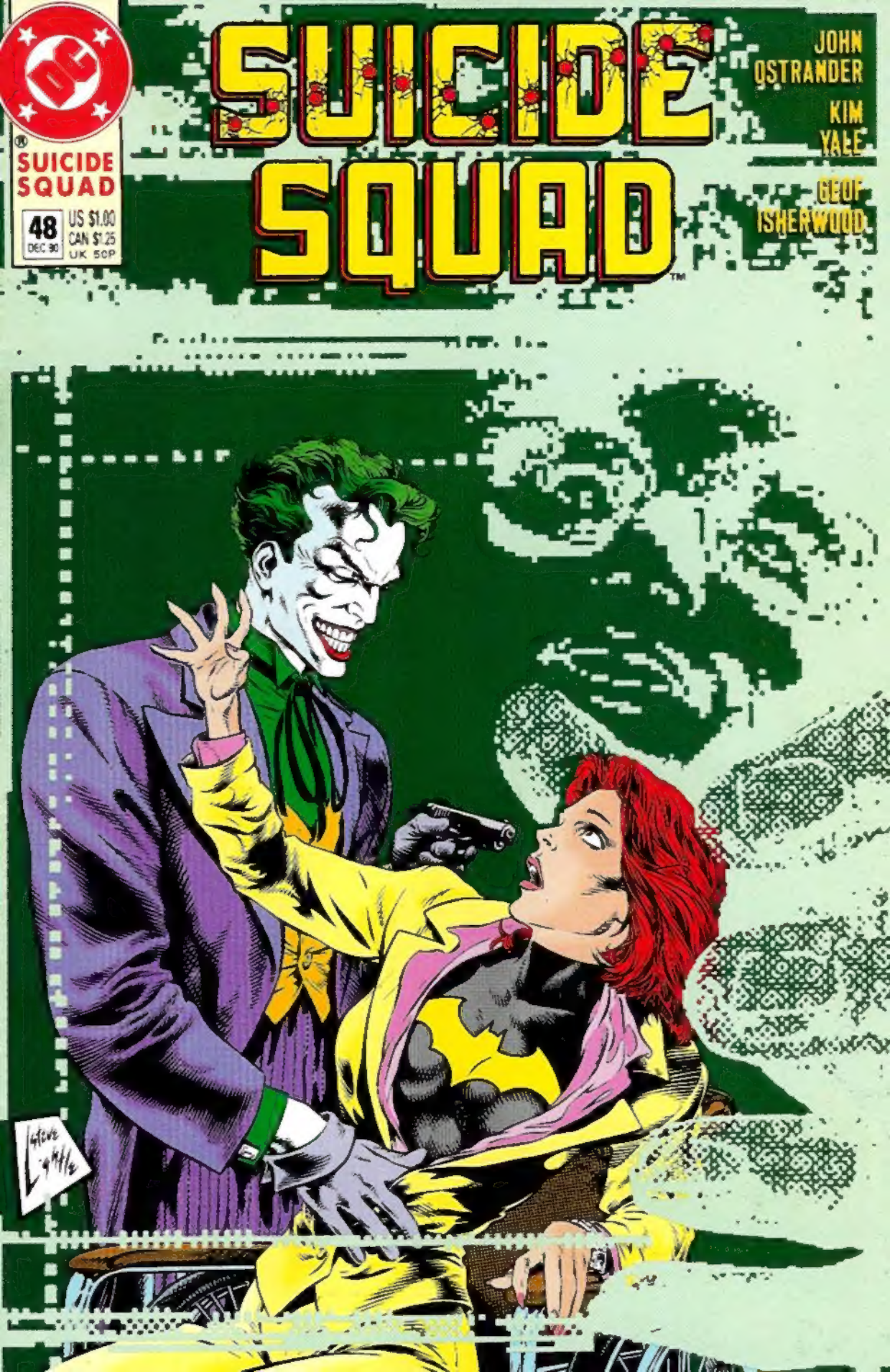
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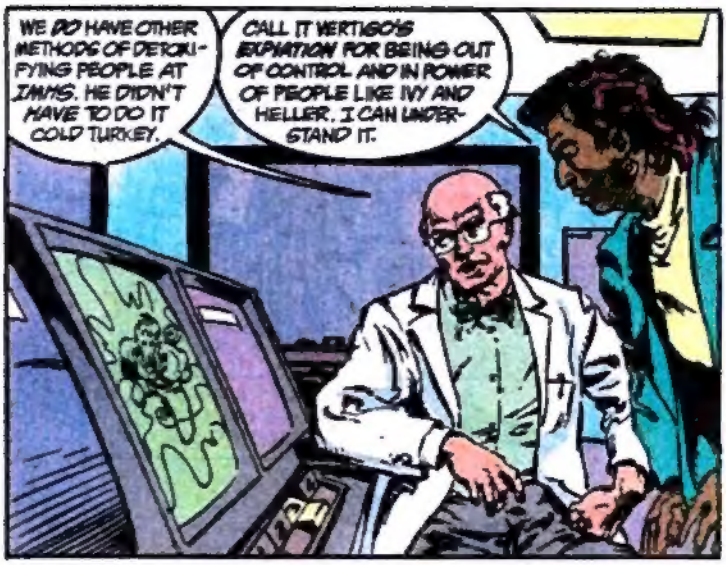
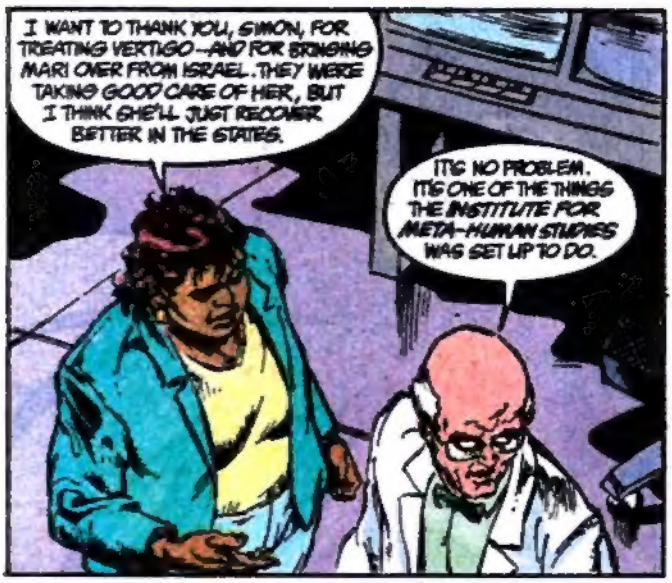
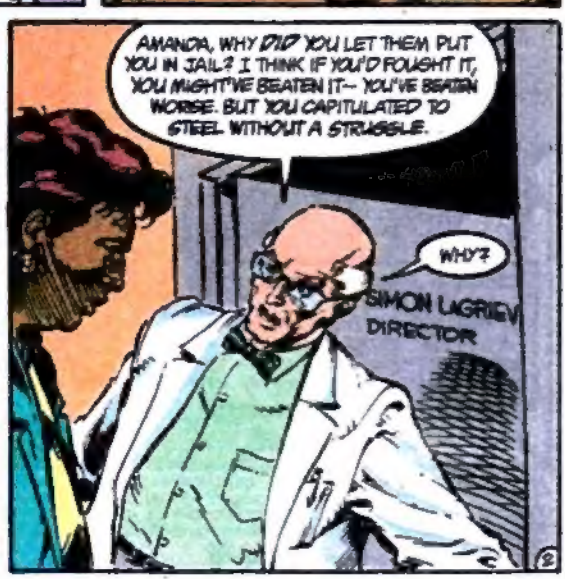

WE DO HAVE OTHER METHODS OF DETOXIFYING PEOPLE AT IMMS. HE DIDN'T HAVE TO DO IT COLD TURKEY.
CALL IT VERTIGO'S EXPIATION FOR BEING OUT OF CONTROL AND IN POWER OF PEOPLE LIKE IVY AND HELLER. I CAN UNDERSTAND IT.

"ITS A GOOD THING THAT CELL IS TOTALLY SOUNDPROOF. EITHER THE STAFF WOULD HAVE RUPTURED EARDRUMS OR BE SO DIZZY THEY COULDN'T STAND."


I WANT TO THANK YOU, SIMON, FOR TREATING VERTIGO--AND FOR BRINGING MARI OVER FROM ISRAEL. THEY WERE TAKING GOOD CARE OF HER, BUT I THINK SHE'LL JUST RECOVER BETTER IN THE STATES.
IT'S NO PROBLEM. IT'S ONE OF THE THINGS THE INSTITUTE FOR META-HUMAN STUDIES WAS SET UP TO DO.

I'M ALSO SORRY I COULDN'T DO ANYTHING TO HELP--BACK WHEN YOU WERE SHOT.
YOU WERE IN PRISON AT THE TIME, AMANDA. THERE WASN'T MUCH YOU COULD DO.

YEAH, WELL--IT STILL RUBBED RAW. WE HAVEN'T ALWAYS SEEN EYE-TO-EYE, SIMON, AND I KNOW WE DIDN'T PART WELL LAST TIME I SAW YOU, BUT I'VE ALWAYS RESPECTED YOU.
I LIKE YOU, TOO, AMANDA. AND SINCE I'VE BECOME THE HEAD OF IMMS--
--I THINK A BIT BETTER OF YOU.


AMANDA, WHY DID YOU LET THEM PUT YOU IN JAIL? I THINK IF YOU'D FOUGHT IT, YOU MIGHT'VE BEATEN IT-- YOU'VE BEATEN WORSE. BUT YOU CAPITULATED TO STEEL WITHOUT A STRUGGLE.
WHY?
SIMON LAGRIEV
DIRECTOR

WHY?

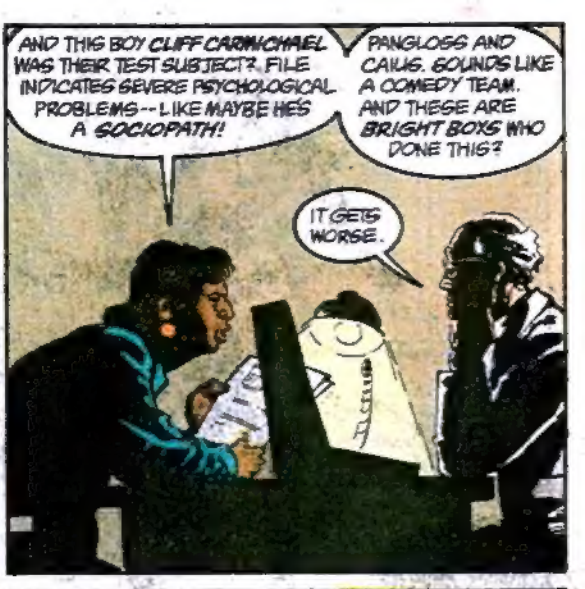
I CROSSED THE LINE, SIMON. I KNEW IT AND DID IT DELIBERATELY. GIVEN THE SAME SITUATION, I'D DO THE EXACT SAME THING AGAIN.
IF I DID IT AND JUST GOT AWAY WITH IT, I'D UNDERMINE EVERYTHING I'M SUPPOSED TO BE DEFENDING. I HAD TO PAY A PRICE--AND I DID.

MIND YOU, I'M NOT PRETENDING TO BE A SAINT. I TOOK THE FIRST LEGITIMATE OUT THEY OFFERED ME.
AND, I'LL ADMIT, I FIGURED STEEL WOULD TURN UP WITH A DEAL SOONER OR LATER. BUT I WAS WILLING TO SERVE MY TIME--IF NECESSARY. GLAD I DIDN'T HAVE TO.

I'M GLAD YOU HAVEN'T GOTTEN ALL NOBLE. YOU OWE ME A FAVOR.
YOU GOT A PROBLEM?

OH YEG.
READ THIG.

REMEMBER THE THINKER'S HELMET THAT YOU LEFT WITH ME FOR SAFEKEEPING? WHILE I WAS HOSPITALIZED, TWO SCIENTISTS HERE GOT HOLD OF IT AND DECIDED TO RUN SOME TESTS WITH IT.


AND THIS BOY CLIFF CARMICHAEL WAS THEIR TEST SUBJECT?. FILE INDICATES SEVERE PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS--LIKE MAYBE HE'S A SOCIOPATH!
PANGLOSS AND CAUG. SOUNDS LIKE A COMEDY TEAM. AND THESE ARE BRIGHT BOYS WHO DONE THIS?
IT GETS WORSE.

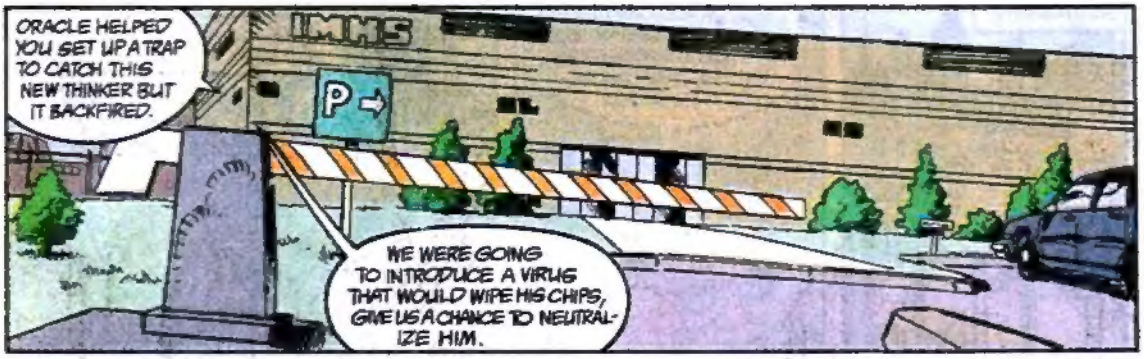
CARMICHAEL USED THE HELMET TO ANALYZE THE HELMET. HE IMPROVED THE DESIGN AND HAD IT REDUCED TO A SERIES OF MICROCHIPS WHICH HE HAD IMPLANTED DIRECTLY INTO HIS SKULL.
PLUS, HE HAD A SERIAL PORT INSTALLED IN THE BASE OF HIS NECK SO HE COULD DIRECTLY INTERFACE WITH ANY COMPUTER.

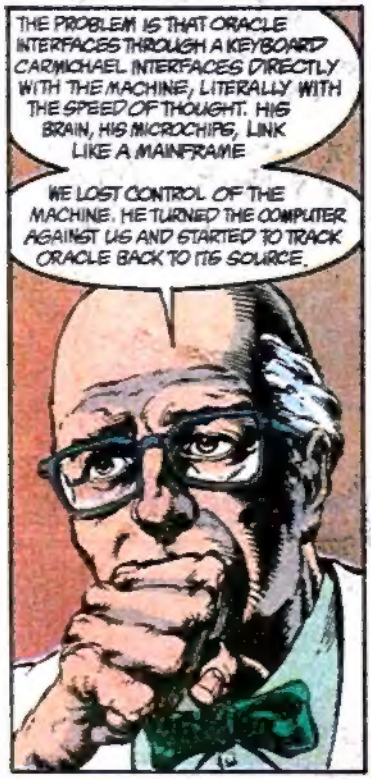
SO WHAT YOU'RE TELLING ME IS WE NOW HAVE A NEW THINKER, BETTER THAN THE FIRST, WHO IS ALSO A SOCIOPATH WITH NO SENSE OF RIGHT OR WRONG.
A LIVING, BREATHING CYBERPUNK. WE THINK HE ALSO MIGHT BE ABLE TO CONTROL ANOTHER PERSON'S BRAIN WITHIN A FIELD OF MAYBE SIX FEET.

LET ME GUESS. HE'S LOOSE, ISN'T HE?
YES.

AND YOU WANT THE SQUAD TO GO AFTER HIM. WHY NOT USE YOUR OWN GROUP, THE...WHARCHAMACALLEM... CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY?
CAN'T DO IT. THAT'S THE OTHER PROBLEM.
HE'S AFTER ORACLE.

GOTHAM CITY.
CUTE, ORACLE. ENTIRELY FICTITIOUS ADDRESS. DOESN'T MATTER. I'M CLOSING IN. OH YES, DEAR ORACLE-- I'LL FIND YOU.
GIMME YOUR COAT, HOMEBOY. YOUR WATCH AND WALLET, TOO. MAYBE WE LET YOU GET OUT OF HERE ALIVE.
SHOULDN'T YOU SCARE ME FIRST?
EVERYONE TAKE OUT THEIR KNIVES. THREATEN ME. MAKE ME QUAKE IN MY BOOTS.
GOOD. GOOOOOOD. NOW, JUST TO SHOW ME HOW LITTLE LIFE MEANS TO YOU--WHY DON'T YOU EACH STICK YOUR KNIVES IN THE THROAT OF THE GUY ON YOUR RIGHT?
GAK!
HAHAHA!
UK!
GURK!
NOW... WHERE IS THIS NEXT ADDRESS?


ORACLE HELPED YOU SET UP A TRAP TO CATCH THIS NEW THINKER BUT IT BACKFIRED.
IMHS
P
WE WERE GOING TO INTRODUCE A VIRUS THAT WOULD WIPE HIS CHIPS, GIVE US A CHANCE TO NEUTRALIZE HIM.


THE PROBLEM IS THAT ORACLE INTERFACES THROUGH A KEYBOARD. CARMICHAEL INTERFACES DIRECTLY WITH THE MACHINE, LITERALLY WITH THE SPEED OF THOUGHT. HIS BRAIN, HIS MICROCHIPS, LINK LIKE A MAINFRAME.
WE LOST CONTROL OF THE MACHINE. HE TURNED THE COMPUTER AGAINST US AND STARTED TO TRACK ORACLE BACK TO ITS SOURCE.

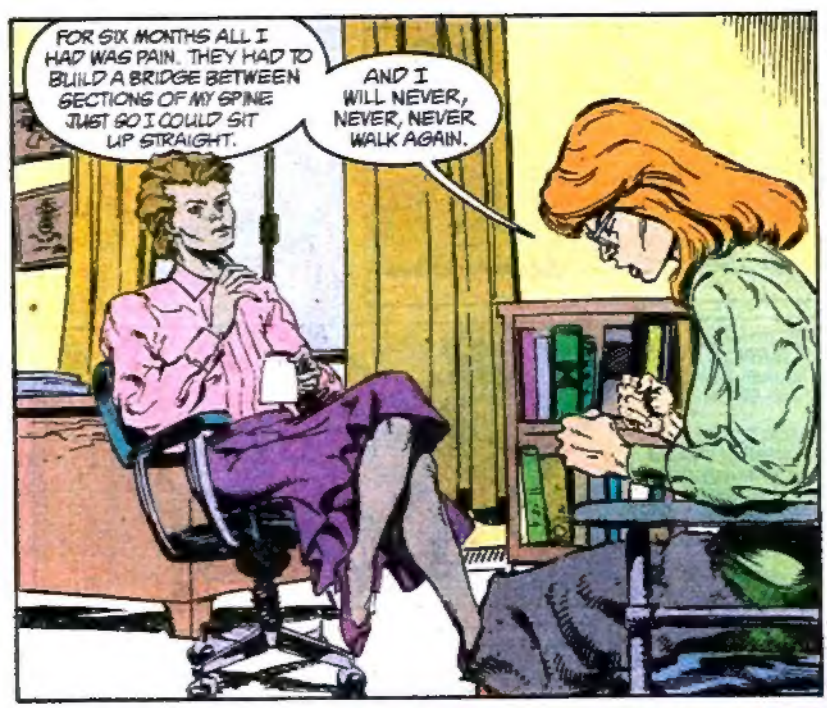
SO THE PROBLEM IS TO GET TO ORACLE BEFORE CARMICHAEL DOES. OF COURSE, WE HAVE NO IDEA WHO OR WHERE ORACLE IS OR HOW MUCH CARMICHAEL ALREADY KNOWS.
NICE PROBLEM.

YOUR COMPUTERS RECORD THE CLASH BETWEEN CARMICHAEL AND ORACLE?
YES, BUT IT'S ALL ALGORITHMS. EVEN USING THE COMPUTER, WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO SIFT IT FOR USEABLE DATA.

THE TRAIL STARTS THERE IF IT STARTS ANYWHERE. AND I CAN THINK OF ONE WAY OF GETTING IT.
TELL ME-- YOU STILL HAVE THE OLD THINKER'S HELMET?

"I'M IN THE HOUSE AGAIN, RUNNING DOWN THAT LONG STRETCH OF CORRIDORS, AND I HAVE TO OPEN THE DOOR BEFORE DAD DOES."
DON'T WORRY, DAD--I'VE GOT IT!
DON'T WORRY, DAD--I'VE GOT IT!
"AM I RUNNING TO HIM--OR AWAY FROM HIM? I DON'T KNOW. BUT HE'S ALWAYS BEHIND THE LAST DOOR.
"BUT IT'S NOT ALWAYS THE SAME PERSON STANDING THERE."
WITZ

BLAM
"AND THEN I FEEL THE BULLET BORING ITS WAY THROUGH MY BODY. MY LEGS GIVE WAY, USELESS AS MY SPINE IS SEVERED. THERE'S THIS AWFUL WRENCH AND GRINDING IN MY BACK—LIKE A CLUTCH OUT OF GEAR—AND THEN PAIN.
"THERE'S A WOMAN SCREAMING FOR RESCUE THAT NEVER COMES. AND THE ROOM STINKS OF CORDITE AND BLOOD—MY BLOOD—AND THE JOKER CLAWS AT ME. AND THERE IS PAIN.
"AND THEN THE JOKER IS BEATING ME, AND HE SMELLS LIKE PARAFFIN AND ROTTEN LILACS, SCREECHING I'M NOT CO-OPERATING, AND EVERY BLOW REVERBERATES THROUGH MY SHOT-OUT, SHATTERED SPINE.
AND THERE IS PAIN.
"AND THEN—THEN—WHEN HE'S—WHEN I'M NAKED—HE STARTS TAKING PICTURES AND I CAN'T STOP HIM!
"AND WHEN—WHEN HE'S DONE—THE JOKER JUST... LAUGHS!"
NOTHING PERSONAL, M'DEAR. THIS IS REALLY ALL FOR BATMAN'S BENEFIT.
SMILE!
HA HA HA


FOR SIX MONTHS ALL I HAD WAS PAIN. THEY HAD TO BUILD A BRIDGE BETWEEN SECTIONS OF MY SPINE JUST SO I COULD SIT UP STRAIGHT.
AND I WILL NEVER, NEVER, NEVER WALK AGAIN.

YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO BE ANGRY. IT WAS A HEINOUS ACT. IT WAS UNFAIR. YOU NEED TO TELL OTHER PEOPLE ABOUT YOUR RAGE-- LIKE YOUR FATHER.
WHENEVER YOU'RE WITH HIM, YOU PUT ON THE ACT OF PERKY, PLUCKY BARBARA GORDON. WHY?

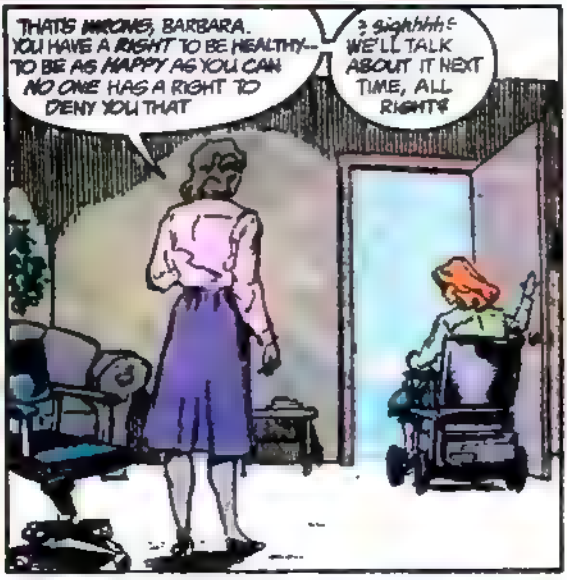
WHAT GOOD WOULD IT DO TO GET MAD? HE'D ONLY FEEL MORE ASHAMED AND GUILTY.
HE HOLDS HIMSELF RESPONSIBLE. DAD ALWAYS REFUSED TO HAVE AN OFFICER ON DUTY GUARDING US LIKE THEY DO IN OTHER CITIES. WANTED TO BE MORE "ACCESSIBLE" TO THE TAXPAYERS. WE WERE "ACCESSIBLE," ALL RIGHT.

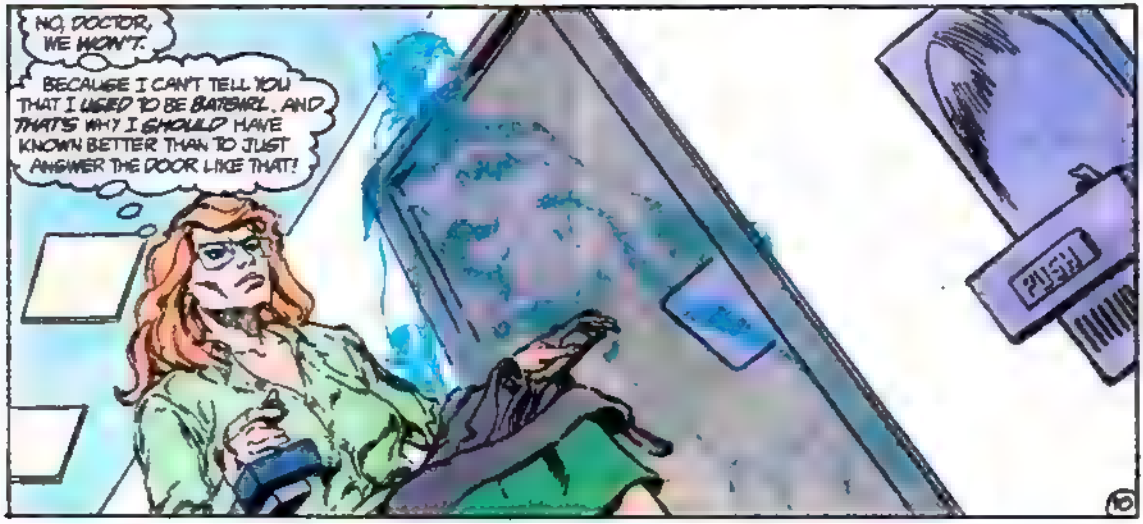
BUT YOU DO BLAME HIM--AND BATMAN. NOT UNREASONABLY!
I BLAME MYSELF MOSTLY. I SHOULD'VE KNOWN BETTER THAN TO JUST POP OPEN THE DOOR WITHOUT SEEING WHO IT WAS.

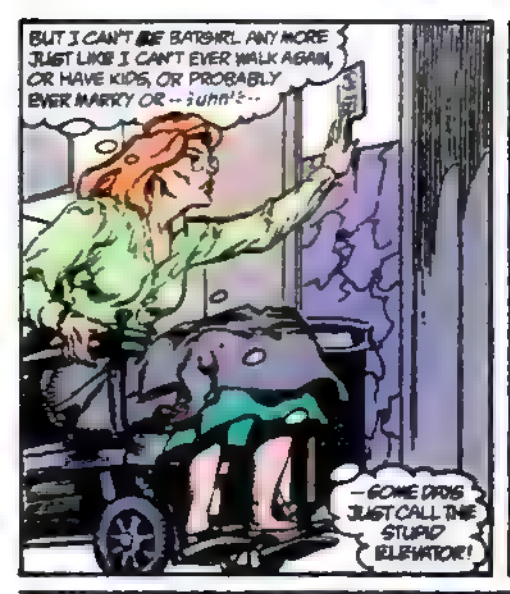
WHY?
WHY SHOULD YOU HAVE KNOWN BETTER?

BARBARA, THERE'S STILL SOME THINGS THAT YOU'RE KEEPING BACK.
PERHAPS YOU DON'T FEEL COMPORTABLE TALKING ABOUT THEM WITH ME BUT, YOU NEED TO CONFIDE IN SOMEONE.

I'M SORRY, DR. MILLER. I'M TELLING YOU EVERYTHING I CAN, BUT—SOME SECRETS AREN'T JUST MINE

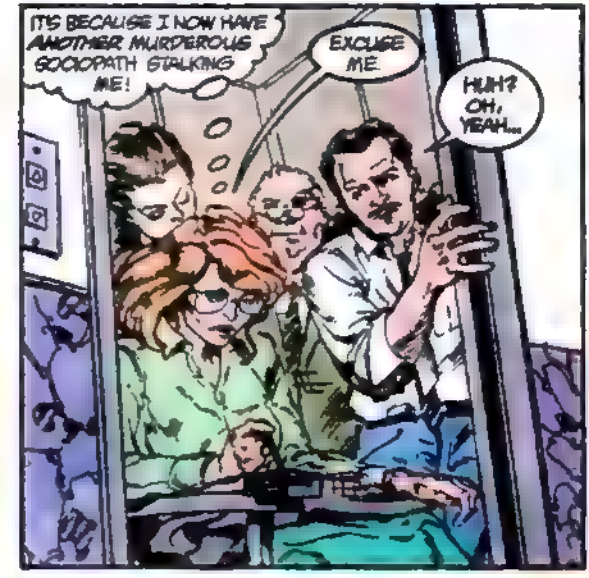

THATS WRONG, BARBARA. YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO BE HEALTHY—TO BE AS HAPPY AS YOU CAN NO ONE HAS A RIGHT TO DENY YOU THAT
; sighhhh: WE'LL TALK ABOUT IT NEXT TIME, ALL RIGHT?


NO, DOCTOR, WE WON'T.
BECAUSE I CAN'T TELL YOU THAT I USED TO BE BATGIRL. AND THAT'S WHY I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER THAN TO JUST ANSWER THE DOOR LIKE THAT!
PUSH

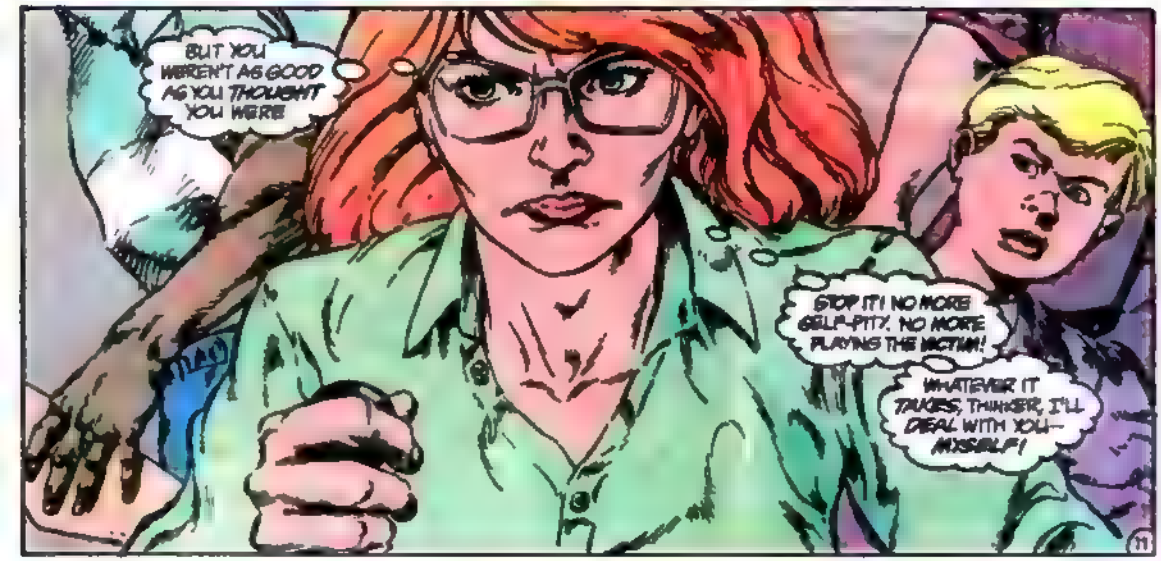

BUT I CAN'T BE BATGIRL ANY MORE JUST LIKE I CAN'T EVER WALK AGAIN, OR HAVE KIDS, OR PROBABLY EVER MARRY OR -- ¡uhh!¿--
—COME ON! JUST CALL THE STUPID ELEVATOR!

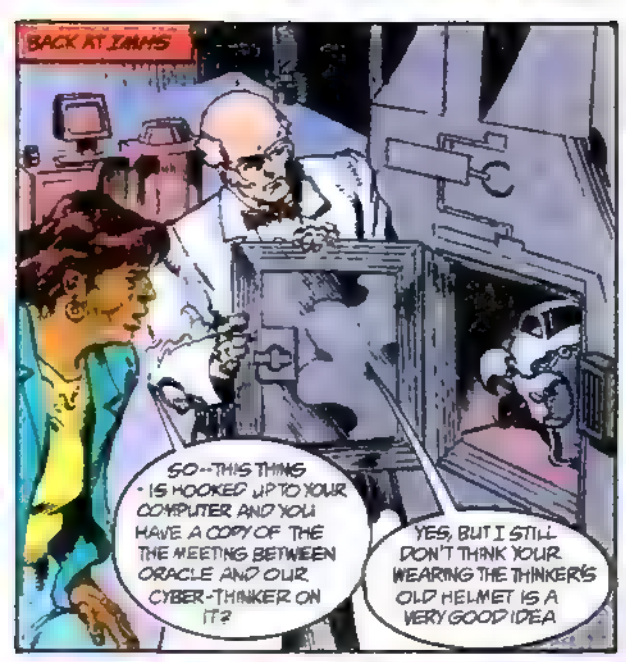
AND I CAN'T TELL YOU THE OBVIOUS REASON THAT I'M DREAMING ABOUT THAT MURDEROUS SOCIOPATH AGAIN.

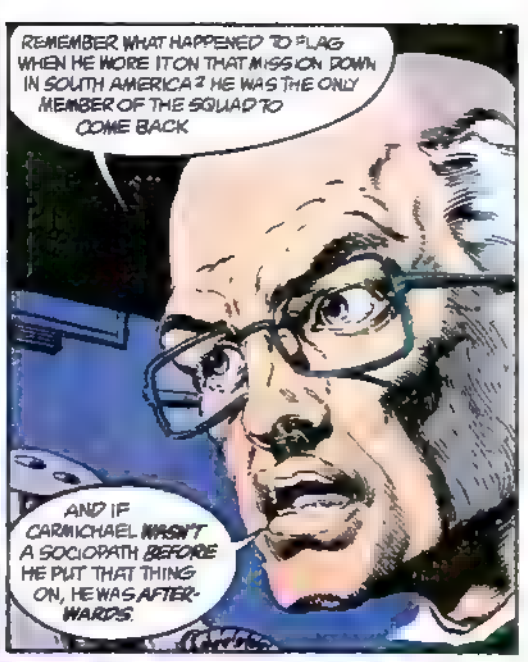
WOULD SOMEONE HOLD THE DOOR FOR ME, PLEASE? THANK YOU.

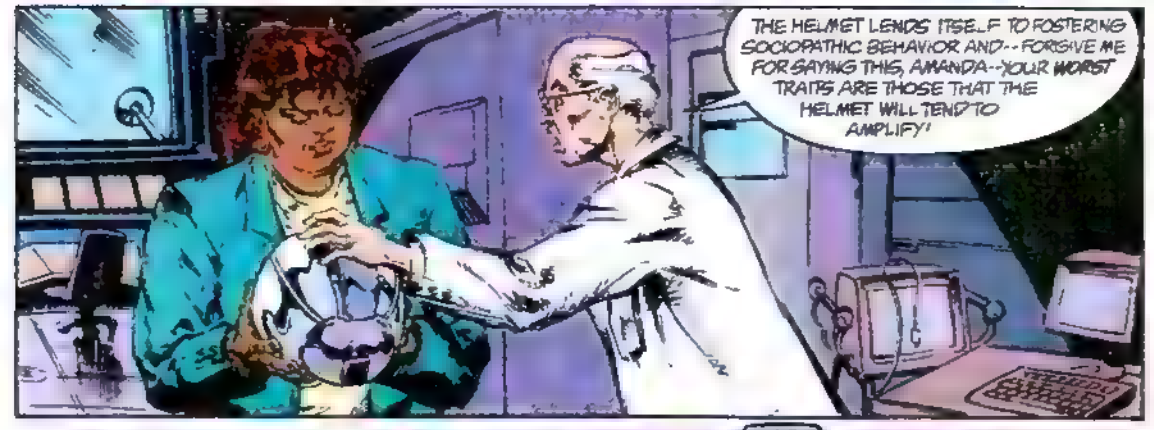

IT'S BECAUSE I NOW HAVE ANOTHER MURDEROUS SOCIOPATH STALKING ME!
EXCUSE ME.
HUH? OH, YEAH...

AND WHOSE FAULT IS THIS ONE, BARBARA? BATMAN'S? DAD'S? SIMON LA GRIEVE? UH-UH.
YOU WANTED TO BE A SUPERHERO AGAIN SO YOU CREATED A COMPUTER VERSION AND CALLED YOURSELF ORACLE.


BUT YOU WEREN'T AS GOOD AS YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE!
STOP IT! NO MORE SELF-PITY. NO MORE PLAYING THE VICTIM!
WHATEVER IT TAKES, THINKER, I'LL DEAL WITH YOU— MYSELF!

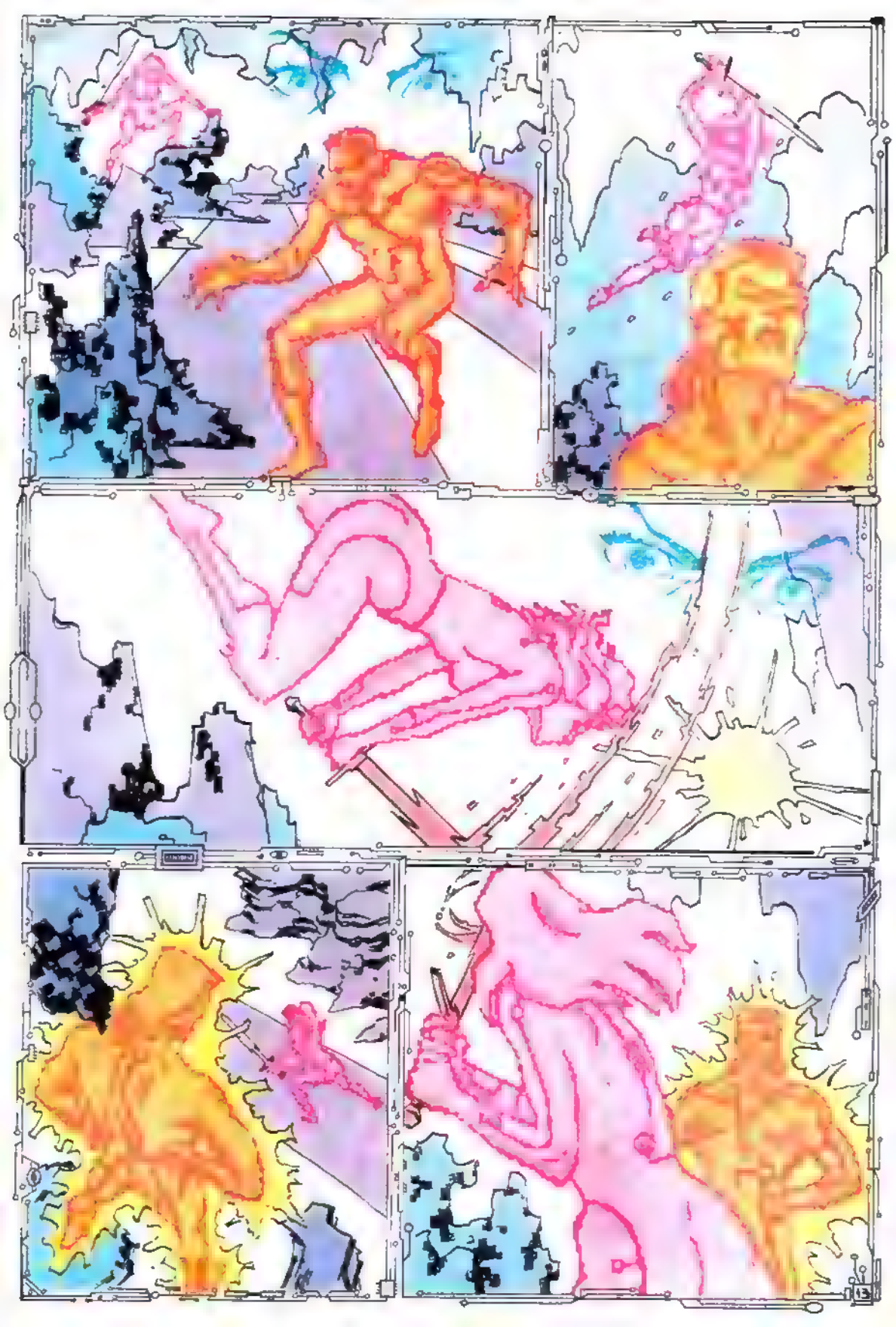

BACK AT IMMS
SO--THIS THING IS HOOKED UP TO YOUR COMPUTER AND YOU HAVE A COPY OF THE THE MEETING BETWEEN ORACLE AND OUR CYBER-THINKER ON IT?
YES, BUT I STILL DON'T THINK YOUR WEARING THE THINKER'S OLD HELMET IS A VERY GOOD IDEA

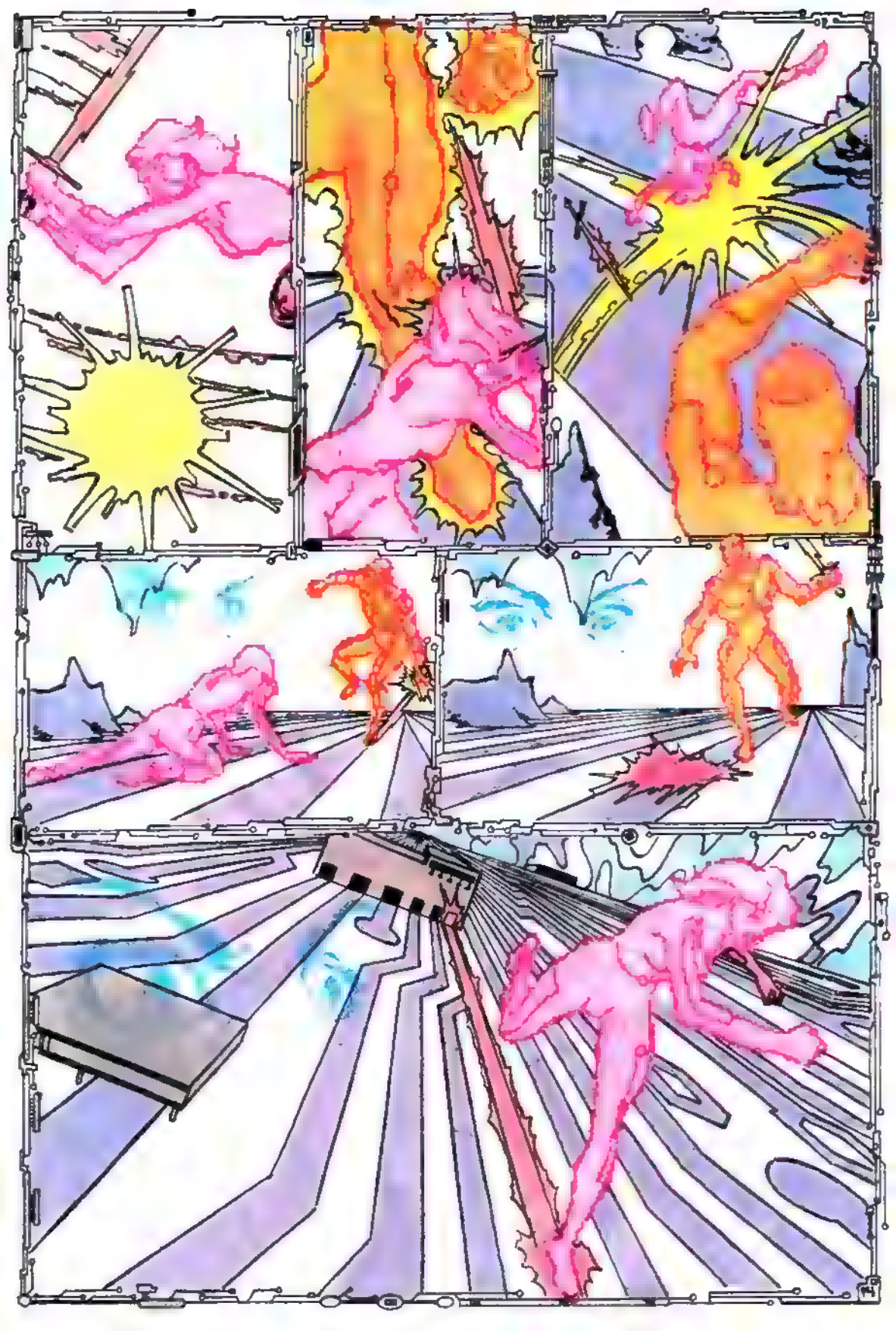

REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED TO FLAG WHEN HE WORE IT ON THAT MISSION DOWN IN SOUTH AMERICA? HE WAS THE ONLY MEMBER OF THE SQUAD TO COME BACK
AND IF CARMICHAEL WASN'T A SOCIOPATH BEFORE HE PUT THAT THING ON, HE WAS AFTERWARDS.

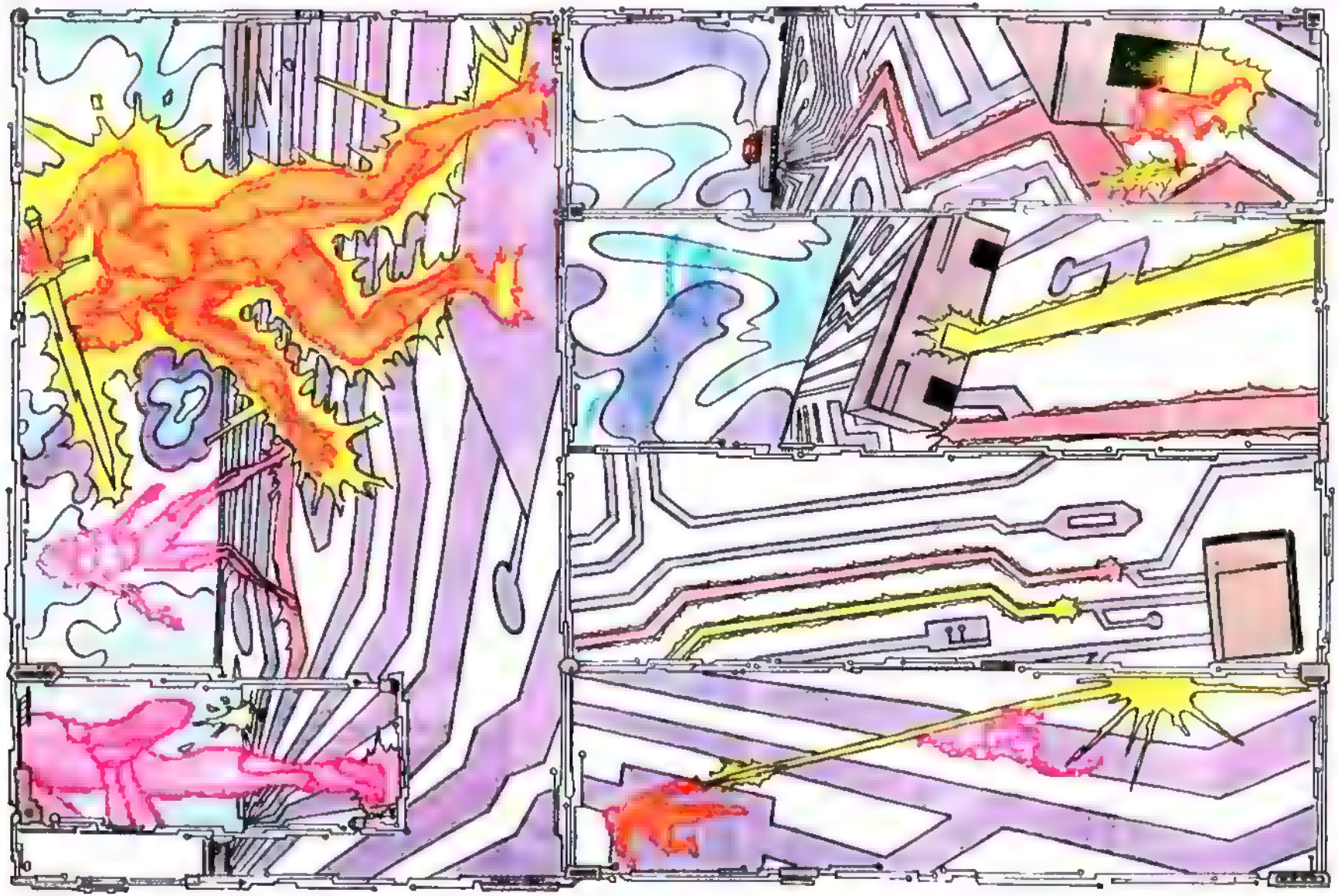

THE HELMET LENDS ITSELF TO FOSTERING SOCIOPATHIC BEHAVIOR AND--FORGIVE ME FOR SAYING THIS, AMANDA--YOUR WORST TRAITS ARE THOSE THAT THE HELMET WILL TEND TO AMPLIFY!

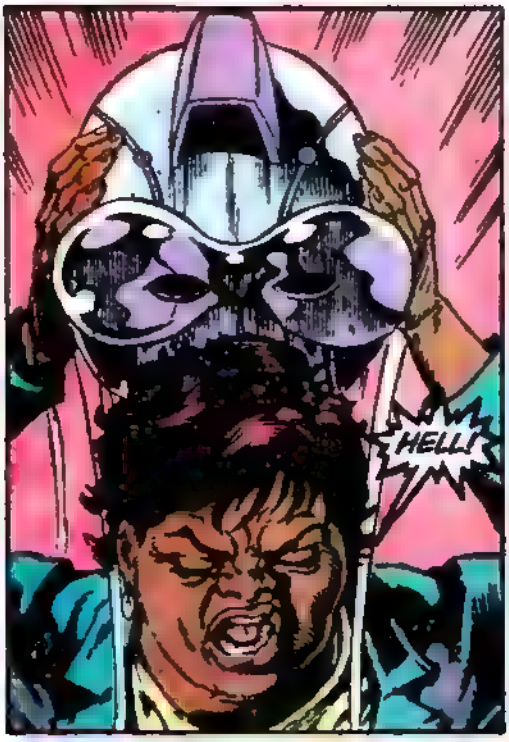
UNFORTUNATELY, THAT MAY BE WHAT'S NEEDED. I HAVE TO KNOW WHAT CARMICHAEL KNOWS--EXPERIENCE WHAT HE LEARNED IN THAT ENCOUNTER
MORE IMPORTANT, I HAVE TO THINK LIKE HIM--SEE THINGS AS HE DOES--KNOW HOW HIS MIND WORKS

THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY OF DOING THAT, SIMON--
--I HAVE TO CLIMB INTO HIS SECTION OF HELL WITH HIM.
AND THEN HOPE I CAN FIND MY WAY BACK OUT!

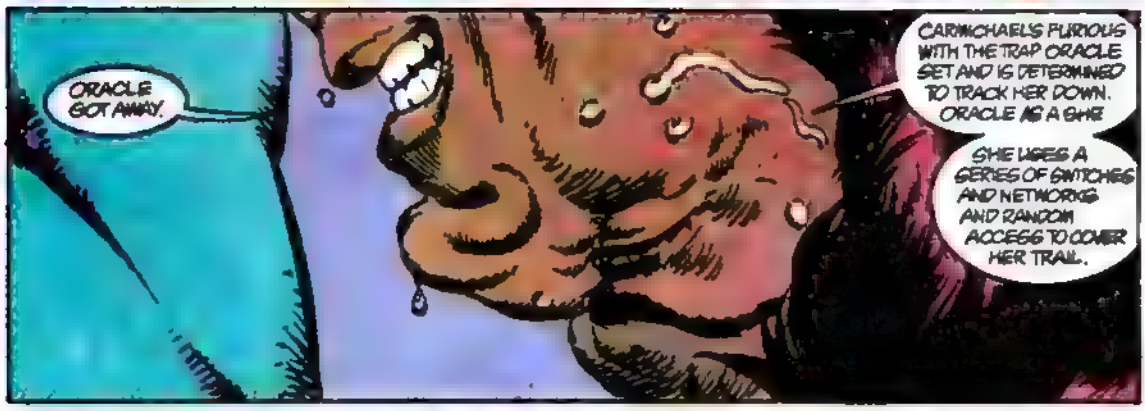







HELL!

AMANDA! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?


ORACLE GOT AWAY.
CARMICHAEL'S FURIOUS WITH THE TRAP ORACLE SET AND IS DETERMINED TO TRACK HER DOWN. ORACLE AS A SHE
SHE USES A SERIES OF SWITCHES AND NETWORKS AND RANDOM ACCESS TO COVER HER TRAIL.

THIS CAN WAIT
NO. THE MEMORIES WILL FADE. MAKE SURE THIS IS RECORDED.
THE THINKER HAS AN IDEA OF THE EQUIPMENT SHE WOULD NEED TO PULL ALL THIS OFF AND SOME OF IT IS PRETTY SPECIALIZED.

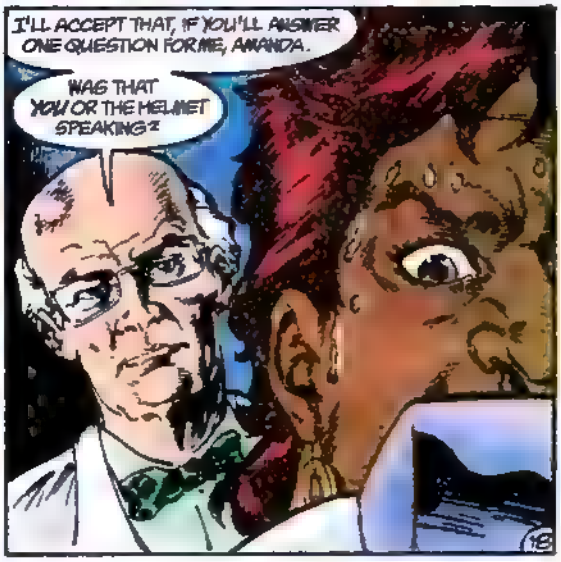
HE COBBLED UP A LIST OF THE MANUFACTURERS AND THEN INVADED THEIR SYSTEMS AND LEARNED WHERE THEY SHIPPED THE STUFF
HE'S TRACKING HIS WAY TO HER USING THE SHIPMENTS HE'LL FIND OUT WHO SHE IS AND THEN KILL NOT ONLY HER BUT ANYONE CLOSE TO HER.

THE PIECES MOST NECESSARY FOR HER SET-UP HAVE BEEN SHIPPED TO DIFFERENT NAMES.
THEY'RE PROBABLY DROP HOUSES--PLACES WHERE THE EQUIPMENT CAN BE DELIVERED BEFORE IT'S SENT ON TO THEIR REAL DESTINATION. I'LL WRITE DOWN A LIST OF THE ADDRESSES.

FINE. BUT FIRST I WANT YOU TO GIVE ME THE THINKER'S HELMET.

CLAP!

NNNNNO NO I'M NOT QUITE DONE WITH IT. THE HELMET'S USEFUL. I LIKE IT.
NO. I'LL KEEP IT WITH ME, SIMON. I'VE GOT A LOT OF USES FOR IT.


I'LL ACCEPT THAT, IF YOU'LL ANSWER ONE QUESTION FOR ME, AMANDA.
WAS THAT YOU OR THE HELMET SPEAKING?

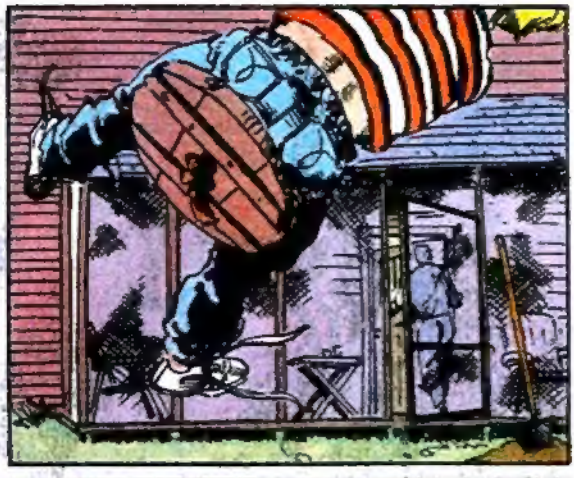
I'M IN CHARGE HERE.
I
AM
IN
CHARGE
HERE!
KRAK!
19

HUH.
WELL, I'VE DONE MORE INTELLIGENT THINGS IN MY LIFE.

YOU MAY NEVER HAVE DONE A BETTER THING, AMANDA.
YEAH, SURE, YOU BET. GIMME A PIECE OF PAPER. IF I FORGET THOSE ADDRESSES NOW, WE WON'T EVER GET 'EM BACK.

THEN LET'S FIND BEN, BOOMERBUTT, AND DEADSHOT. WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO COVER A LOT OF GROUND--FAST!

ELSEWHERE...
KANE



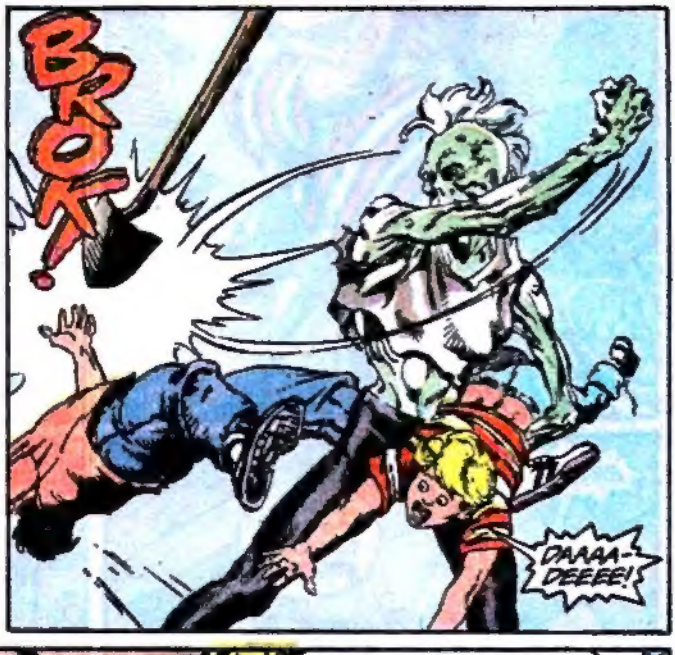
WAAAAH!

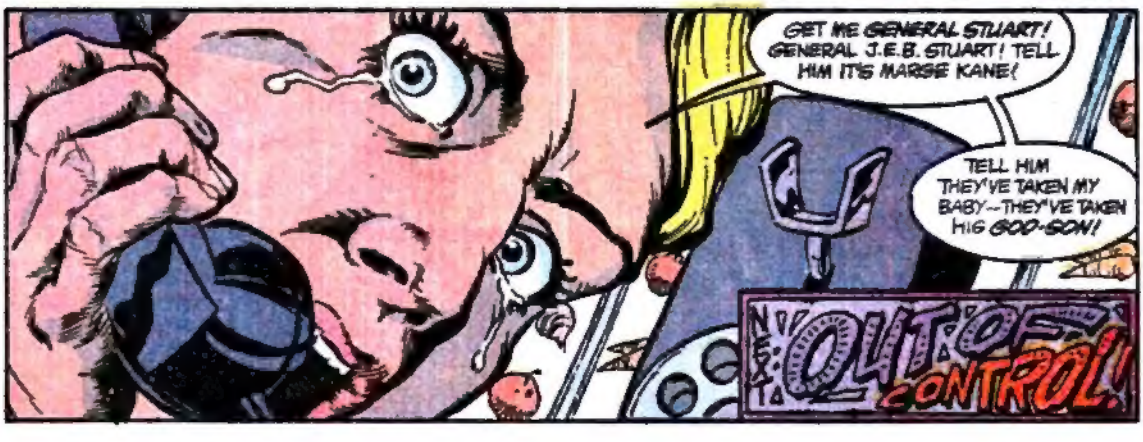
RICKY?!
RICKY, WHAT IS–?! OMIGOD! OMIGOD!

HSSSSSSS...!
MOMMMM-MEEEE...!

MARSE, STAY BACK! CALL THE GENERAL!
CALL THE GENERAL!
WAAAAAH!

KLONG!


BROK!
DAAAA-DEEEE!


GET ME GENERAL STUART! GENERAL J.E.B. STUART! TELL HIM IT'S MARSE KANE!
TELL HIM THEY'VE TAKEN MY BABY--THEY'VE TAKEN HIS GOD-SON!
OUT OF CONTROL!